

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 03018 032204Z

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S E C R E T BOGOTA 3018

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TAGS PINR PN PQ CO

SUBJ: SPECIAL NATIONAL INTEL ESTIMATE (SNIE) ON PANAMA

REF STATE 71284

1. IN THE EVENT OF CONTINGENCY "A" (TREATY IS SIGNED AND BOTH SIDES BEGIN THE RATIFICATION PROCESS), THE GOC AND LOCAL OPINION LEADERS CAN BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A CONSTRUCTIVE LINE. THE COLOMBIAN PREFERENCE FOR LEGAL PROCEDURES AND RELIANCE ON INTERNATIONAL ORGS AND AGREEMENTS WOULD PROBABLY MANIFEST ITSELF IN STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE TREATY AND IN HOPEFUL PROGNOSTICATIONS ON FUTURE HEMISPHERIC RELATIONS. THIS SCENARIO IS POSITED ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF TIMELY AND SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE COLOMBIAN TRANSIT RIGHTS PROVIDED FOR IN THE URRUTIA-THOMPSON TREATY. DESPITE THE STATEMENTS MADE IN PANAMA WHEREBY COLOMBIA IS TO ACCEPT TRANSIT RIGHTS FROM PANAMA AT SUCH TIME AS PANAMA CAN OFFER SUCH RIGHTS, THE GOC RETAINS A LIVELY INTEREST IN US GUARANTEES OF ISTHMIAN TRANSIT. A FAILURE BY THE US TO CONSULT WITH THE GOC AT AN APPROPRIATE STAGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS COULD COST THE OTHERWISE NEAR-CERTAIN SUPPORT OF COLOMBIA IN THE CASE OF CONTINGENCY A.

2. THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONTINGENCY "B" (A TREATY ISSIGNED BUT THE US SENATE FAILS TO ACT UPON IT FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OR REFUSES TO APPROVE IT) ENCOMPASS BOTH A SEVERE SETBACK TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH COLOMBIA AND, BY EXTENSION, A SETBACK IN INTER AMERICAN FORUMS WHERE COLOMBIA HAS FREQUENTLY BEEN A

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BOGOTA 03018 032204Z

MODERATING FORCE AND SERVED AS A "BRIDGE" BETWEEN US AND LATIN

VIEWPOINTS. COLOMBIA'S SHIFT AWAY FROM ITS CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE US WOULD BE ACCELERATED, WITH THE CANAL ISSUE SERVING TO BRING TO THE SURFACE A NUMBER OF OBJECTIONS TO US POLICIES THAT ARE NOW MORE OR LESS QUIESCENT. THE US FAILURE TO RATIFY THE QUITA SUENO TREATY WOULD CERTAINLY BE USED AS A PARALLEL ILLUSTRATION OF US ATTITUDES TOWARD LA STATES. THE HISTORY OF THE SEPARATION OF PANAMA FROM COLOMBIA, OF WHICH SURPRISINGLY LITTLE IS HEARD IN CONTEMPORARY COLOMBIA, WOULD PROBABLY BE USED BY POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS AS ILLUSTRATION OF AN IMMUTABLE "IMPERIALIST" POLICY EXERCISED BY THE US IN LA. THE GOC WOULD, DESPITE ITS CONCERN FOR ORDERLY CANAL OPS, ALMOST CERTAINLY OPT FOR LATIN SOLIDARITY AND GIVE SUPPORT TO ANY PANAMANIAN MOVES TO PLACE THE CANAL ISSUE BEFORE THE WORLD COURT OR OTHER EXTRA-HEMISPHERIC BODIES. THE COLOMBIAN PREFERENCE FOR RESOLVING ISSUES WITHIN THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM, ALREADY WEAKENED BY THE CUBAN QUESTION, IN WHICH INSTANCE THE COLOMBIAN PERCEPTION WAS THAT OF MANY YEARS OF ACCOMMODATION TO US POLICIES WITHOUT ANY RECIPROCAL EFFORTS BY THE US, WOULD UNDERGO FURTHER EROSION. COLOMBIA WOULD PROBABLY GIVE GREATER SUPPORT THAN IT NOW DOES TO SELA AND OTHER GROUPS FROM WHICH THE US IS EXCLUDED. IN SUMMARY, CONTINGENCY "B" HOLDS THE POTENTIAL FOR DAMAGE TO BILATERAL RELATIONS HERE AND, WHILE NOT IN ITSELF MAKING AN ADVERSARY OF COLOMBIA, COULD PLACE THE GOC IN SUCH A POSITION OF SUPPORT FOR ADVERSARIES OF THE US THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS WOULD ENTER A NEW, LESS FRIENDLY AND DIFFICULT TO MANAGE PHASE.

3. THE ADVENT OF CONTINGENCY "C" (THE NEGOTIATORS CANNOT AGREE ON AN ACCEPTABLE TREATY AND TALKS BREAK DOWN) WOULD GENERATE SIMILAR BUT LESS SEVERE REACTIONS. THE ABSENCE OF A FOCAL POINT, SUCH AS A US SENATE VOTE, WOULD SERVE TO DILUTE THE REACTION. A GREAT DEAL WOULD DEPEND ON THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ON THE STATEMENTS OF US AND PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS AT SUCH A JUNCTURE. IF THE TALKS ARE DESCRIBED AS BEING IN RECESS, THERE WOULD BE A LESS SEVERE REACTION THAN AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THEY HAD BEEN ABANDONED. A BELLICOSE STATEMENT BY TORRIJOS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE THE EFFECT HERE OF A CALL FOR LA UNITY AGAINST US "IMPERIALISM". A BREAKDOWN OF THE TALKS HOWEVER, WOULD ALSO INDICATE THAT SOME OF THE RESPONSIBILITY LAY WITH THE PANAMANIANS. WHILE MOST OF THE ONUS WOULD BE PLACED ON THE US, COLOMBIAN POLITICIANS AND

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BOGOTA 03018 032204Z

JOURNALISTS WOULD, IN MANY INSTANCES, EXPRESS SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PANAMANIAN ROLE.

4. THE COMING INTO BEING OF EITHER OPTION "B" OR "C" WOULD CARRY WITH IT, IN ADDITION TO THE REACTIONS PROJECTED ABOVE, A POSSIBILITY OF SUCH ACTIVITIES (PARA 3 REFTEL) AS ANTI-US DEMONSTRATIONS AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, THE TAKING OF ACTIONS AGAINST US ECONOMIC INTERESTS. THE SCOPE OF SUCH ACTIONS, IF ANY,

WOULD DEPEND ON THE GENERAL TONE OF US-COLOMBIAN RELATIONS AT THAT TIME, AS WELL AS ON THE NATURE OF CANAL-RELATED EVENTS. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE COLOMBIANS HAVE NOT, IN RECENT YEARS, BEEN GIVEN TO VIOLENT ANTI-US DEMONSTRATIONS. IN REGARD TO US ECONOMIC INTERESTS, THE ABSENCE OF HIGHLY VISIBLE US CONCERNS HAS PRECLUDED THE REFLEXIVE MOVES AGAINST US FIRMS THAT SOMETIMES TAKE PLACE IN OTHER LATIN NATIONS. THERE IS, NOW UNDER WAY, A MOVE TO LIMIT FOREIGN OWNERSHIP IN COLOMBIAN INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE. SINCE THE US IS THE SOURCE OF MOST SUCH INVESTMENT, A SOURING OF THE ATMOSPHERE, SUCH AS WOULD STEM FROM US FAILURE TO RATIFY A CANAL TREATY OR A BREAKDOWN OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, MIGHT PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO LIMIT THE US ECONOMIC ROLE HERE. SUCH MANIFESTATIONS HOWEVER WOULD BE SUBSIDIARY TO THE MORE IMPORTANT EVENTS, I E THE EROSION OF THE USEFUL CLOSE AND CORDIAL COLOMBIAN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US. VAKY

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